

MINISTRY OF



AGRICULTURE

ALLOTMENT &

Garden Guide

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IN this new series of monthly "Guides" we are out to help you to get better results from your vegetable plot and your fruit garden. Every month we shall try to do three things: first, we shall remind you of the things that ought to have been done, but may not have been possible because of the weather or for some other reason; secondly, we shall deal with gardening operations for the month; thirdly, we shall look ahead a month or two and remind you of what you need to do in readiness.

For more detailed week by week information you would do well to take in one of the weekly gardening journals, as soon as the supply situation permits. And your daily or weekly newspaper probably runs a gardening feature that would be helpful to you.

Get ready for OUTDOOR WORK

January is generally a fairly quiet time in the garden. But you need to push on with your digging and manuring whenever the weather and the state of the land permit. You should also prune and begin to spray your fruit trees, if you have not already done these jobs. But January is a time when you should be thinking and planning, ordering your seed potatoes, vegetable seeds, fertilizers and so on, and making sure that your tools are in good order and that you are ready to begin gardening in real

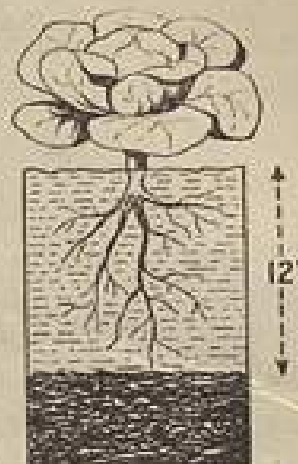
earnest next month, or as soon as local conditions will let you.

Before coming to the various jobs of the month, there is one really important matter that we should say something about—the condition of your soil and the great need to keep it in good heart, for we must not expect to go on producing satisfactory crops year after year unless we restore to the soil what the plants take from it. We must also keep the soil in "good tilth."

What is **GOOD TILTH**?

It is the top foot or so of soil got into a "crumbly" condition. The "crumbs" hold a lot of water on their surfaces and let surplus water drain away quickly through the big pore spaces between them. These spaces supply air, which the roots need as well as water. When rain falls, the uppermost "crumbs" soak it up till they are saturated—like blotting paper dipped in water. Then the surplus soaks downward to the "crumbs" immediately below, and so on. Each "crumb" is like a little sponge. If there is more rain than the "crumbs" can hold, the bigger spaces between them allow the extra water to drain quickly downward and the soil does not become water-logged. The roots of plants in "crumbly" soil can grow easily down the air spaces between the "crumbs." All around them are "crumbs" containing the water the roots need. At

the tips of the roots are tiny hairs which absorb water. So you will see how important it is that the tips of the roots should not be damaged when planting out.



THE VALUE OF HUMUS

What is "humus"? It is a formless material made up of tiny particles produced from the remains of plants and animals when they have decayed. It helps to maintain a "good tilth" and thus ensures good aeration. But it does more; it helps the soil to remain moist and provides plant foods.

'Organic' MANURES

"Organic" manures help to make clay soils lighter and sandy soils better able to hold water. "Organics" are so called because they are formed from something that was living—plants or animals, or both. What



are they? The best known are farmyard manure and other animal droppings, such as pig and poultry manure. Other "organic" manures include guano, hoof and horn meal, dried blood, meat and bone meal, shoddy and soot. But market gardeners make great use of these "organics" and it may not be easy for the amateur grower to get them. You yourself can make "organic" manures, either in the form of green manure—a green crop, such as mustard, grown specially for digging in—or compost, which you can make from waste garden material.

THE THREE ESSENTIAL PLANT FOODS

"Organic" manures usually provide essential plant foods, the three most important being Nitrogen, Phosphate and Potash. Plants need a balanced ration of these foods. They take them in, dissolved in soil water, through their roots. Most soils contain a certain amount of them. But if the plants are to get enough, you must keep up the supply by manuring the soil. You can do this most effectively by using both "organic" manures and mineral fertilizers—popularly called "artificial".



MANURE IN ROTATION

ONIONS		
LEEKs		
PEAS		
BEANS		

But, you may say, farmyard manure is very scarce and most difficult to get. That is true; but you can make compost yourself (Dig for Victory Leaflet No. 7 tells you how—it is free), though maybe you could not make enough from your garden waste to supply all the needs of your land in one season. So it is a question of using wisely what little manure you can get or the compost you can make. If you manured about one-third of your land with farmyard manure or compost every year and practised crop rotation (as recommended in the Ministry's free cropping plan), you would go some way to keeping your soil in good heart. The one-third of the plot most suitable for this treatment is the part where you are going to grow your onions, leeks, peas and beans.

About 'Artificial'

Now a word about "artificial"—or, what is a better term, "mineral fertilizers". The use of the word "artificial" makes some people think that "artificial" are not as good as "organics". Both supply exactly the same kind of plant foods in different quantities. The "organics" generally rot down slowly and so supply steady though small amounts of plant foods during the whole of the plant's growing period.

The well-known Sulphate of Ammonia, which comes from gas works and coke ovens, is a good source of nitrogen. Superphosphate, made from rock, is rich in phosphate;

basic slag, which we get from iron works, also contains phosphate. Potash is dug out of mines in France and Germany.

A SOUND GOVERNMENT FERTILIZER

To meet the needs of gardeners, the Government arranged for the supply of a good standard fertilizer at a reasonable price. It is called "National Growmore Fertilizer" and contains the three important plant foods—the analysis being 7 per cent. N. (nitrogen), 7 per cent. P_2O_5 (phosphate) and 7 per cent. K_2O (potash).

On most soils, 42 lb. of National Growmore Fertilizer should be enough for a 10-rod plot (300 square yards). A few days before sowing or planting, scatter 1 lb. evenly over every 10 sq. yards and rake in. To give this general dressing to a 10-rod allotment will take 30 lb. This will leave 12 lb. for giving an extra dressing to potatoes, winter green crops and spring



cabbages. 4½ lb. should be reserved for potatoes and should be applied at planting time. 5½ lb. should be kept for applying during August to the autumn and winter green crops when they are making active growth. The remaining 2 lb. should be used during March as a top dressing for spring cabbage.

You will be able to get National Growmore Fertilizer from most sundries merchants. Allotment societies and similar bodies, which have hitherto bought their fertilizers in bulk, are able to buy National Growmore Fertilizer in bulk at reduced prices.

On some allotments or in some gardens it may be necessary to give an additional top dressing of a nitrogenous fertilizer (such as Sulphate of Ammonia) to any growing crops, applying it at the rate of about 1 lb. per 10 square yards.

The importance of LIME

Lime is of great importance to the garden. Decaying vegetable matter and certain fertilizers tend to make soils acid or "sour". This is bad for plant growth, so lime must be added to make the soil sweet. Do not add too much, for plants grow best in a neutral soil. Lime contains calcium and this is a plant food. Lime or chalk also improves the texture of clay soils, making it easier to get a good tilth.

So do not neglect to lime your land if it needs it; but do not overdo it. As a general rule the vegetable garden benefits from a dressing of lime every third or fourth year. Lime is particularly good for crops of the cabbage family and helps to control "club root". So lime the part of the plot on which these crops are to be grown. In fact, it is a good plan to lime a third of the plot each year, so that the whole plot will be limed once in three years. Apply the lime after you have finished digging. Do not apply it at the same time as farmyard manure. Fork it in lightly or let it lie on the surface to be washed in by

rain. If you are uncertain whether or not your soil needs lime, ask some knowledgeable person to advise you—your local Parks Superintendent or the County Horticultural Officer at the County Council Offices in your county town.



Gardening societies, which bulk their orders so that they amount to not less than 2 tons, can get lime for food production at half price under the Government's Land Fertility Scheme, if the society is registered as an approved association under the scheme. You can get particulars from the Agricultural Lime Department (U.K.) of the Ministry at Hotel Majestic, St. Annes, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs.

REMINDERS

Here are some reminders of the things to do in case you have not already done them.

GET YOUR SEED CATALOGUE

If you want a catalogue, write to your seedsman, for he is still not allowed to send you one unless you do. And order your seed potatoes and vegetable seeds in good time, not just before it is time to put them in—or you may be caught napping.

SEED POTATOES

You can work out the quantity you will need fairly easily if you remember that seed potatoes usually average 5 or 6 tubers to the pound, and that a convenient distance to plant early varieties is a foot apart; other varieties 15 inches apart.

Yields from allotments and gardens are usually less than from an equal area of potatoes on the farm. One important cause is unsatisfactory seed. No amount of manure or good cultivation will make up for the initial disadvantage of poor seed. It is unwise to save for seed potatoes grown in allotments or gardens. So get good seed carrying a "Health"

certificate issued by one of the Agricultural Departments. That is your safeguard. Consult some knowledgeable local grower about this and about the varieties best suited to your district. Here are some selected varieties for your guidance:—

EARLIES

Epicure, Arran Pilot, Sharpe's Express, Duke of York, May Queen, Ninety-Fold.

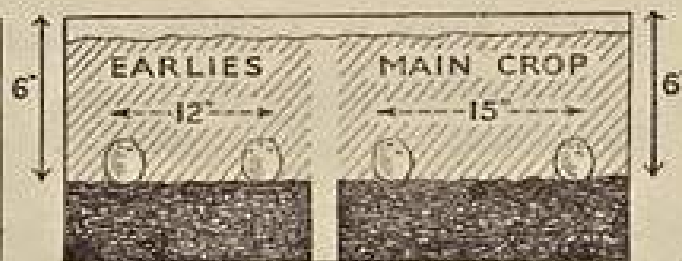
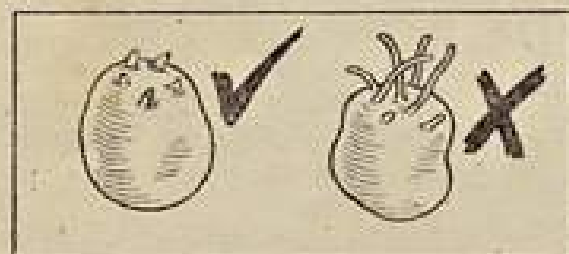
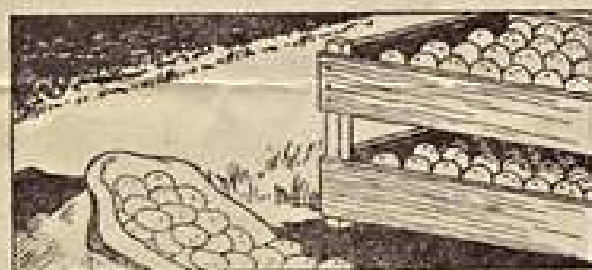
SECOND EARLIES

Dunbar Rover, Great Scot.

MAINCROPS

Majestic, King Edward VII, Arran Banner, Gladstone, Kerr's Pink, Redskin, Up-to-Date, Arran Victory, Arran Peak, Dunbar Standard.

As soon as you get your seed potatoes, place them in shallow boxes with the crown or rose end upwards, and keep in a cool, dry place with plenty of light, but frost-proof. Make quite sure by covering in severe weather. Sprouting potatoes makes for earliness and high yields. "Dig for Victory" Leaflet No. 12 will give you more detailed information about seed potatoes.



VEGETABLE SEEDS

Seedsmen, like most traders, are working under difficulties due to the war. Before the war many of our seeds came from countries that were until recently under enemy control, and while we can still get most kinds, certain varieties—perhaps your favourites—may be short. If you cannot get just the variety you like, trust your seedsman to supply the nearest to it. If you deal with a reliable firm, you will be safe to leave matters in their hands. But order well in advance of sowing time and give the seedsman every chance to do his best for you. If you are in any doubt about varieties that do well in your district, your seedsman will be able to advise you—or you can consult an experienced neighbour. Estimating your seed requirements is fairly easy, once you have sketched out a rough plan of your plot and worked out the number and length of the rows of each vegetable you intend to have.

One pound of shallots contains about 25 bulbs, and 2 lb. should be about enough for an ordinary allotment row of 30



feet. Half an ounce of turnips or swedes will sow 100 feet. A quarter of an ounce of leek will give enough plants for six or eight rows thirty feet long.

One pint of Longpod broad beans will sow a double row 50 feet long. One pint of Windsor broad beans will sow 40 feet of a double row. Half a pint of French or Haricot beans is sufficient for 150 feet. This enables you to sow 2 seeds every 9 inches to allow for failures.

Half a pint of runner beans will sow one row 50 feet long. One ounce of beet will sow 90 feet of row. Half an ounce of carrot is enough for 100 feet. A small packet or $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of each variety of lettuce should be enough for successive sowings to give summer and winter supplies. One ounce of onion seed will sow 150 feet—by sowing very thinly you can make it go still further.

Half an ounce of parsnip is enough for 100 feet. One pint of peas will sow 90 feet of row—if you sow very thinly; for very early sowings you should allow a little more seed, as some may rot if the soil is cold and wet. One ounce of radish will give you all you need.

GET YOUR FERTILIZERS NOW

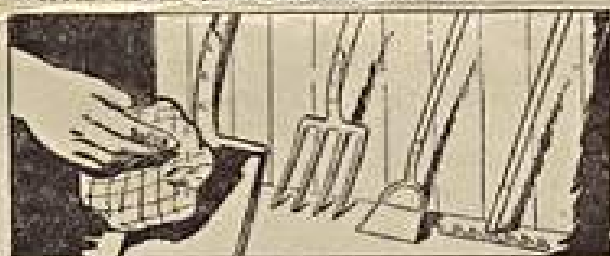
Make sure of your fertilizers now, so that you will have them at hand when needed. 42 lb. of "National Growmore", the Government ap-

proved fertilizer, is enough for a 10-rod (300 sq. yds.) plot, and on page 4 we have told you how to use it.

LOOK AFTER YOUR TOOLS

The wise gardener will examine his tools now and see if any need to be replaced. If so, he will buy them now. Retailers cannot get supplies easily, and if you put off buying until the last minute you may find the tools are not available until it is too late.

A little care is well worth while. Many a tool has had years taken off its useful life by being allowed to rust in a damp shed. No good gardener lets his tools rust, for he knows they take more energy to use when their surfaces are dull.



Here are a few tips for keeping them in first-class order:—

- ★ Never put your garden tools away dirty. Wash off any soil adhering to them and dry them with an old cloth.
- ★ Always wipe them over with an oily rag before putting them away.
- ★ Don't leave them lying about where they may rust or rot.

The best way to keep them in good condition is to use them often.

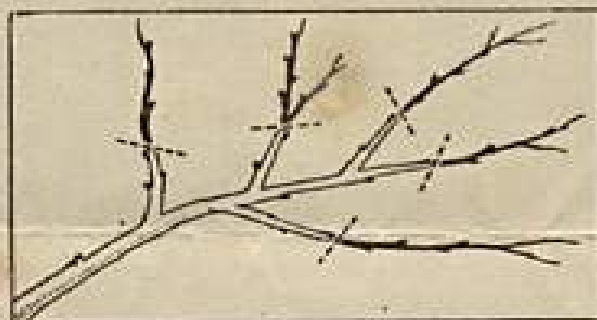
LOOK AT YOUR STORED CROPS

Inspect all crops you have in store. Potatoes, onions, shallots, carrots, beet and turnips should be looked at every few weeks, just to make certain that they are safe from frost, wet, rats and other enemies, removing any that show the first signs of decay.

Look to your FRUIT TREES & BUSHES

Earlier in this "Guide" we have advised you to prune and spray your fruit trees and bushes before the end of January.

Pruning fruit trees is a complicated job; if you have never done it you would be well advised to get a friend fairly skilled at the job to prune your trees for you. Watch him carefully while he is doing it and get him to explain why he is making the various cuts, so that you will get to know how to do it yourself. Very often more damage is done by unwise pruning than if the trees were left unpruned, and it is necessary to know a little about the reasons for pruning before starting. Briefly, the aim is to train the tree into a good shape, to prevent it from becoming a tangled mass of branches that would exclude light and air and to encourage the



production of fruit buds and regular cropping.

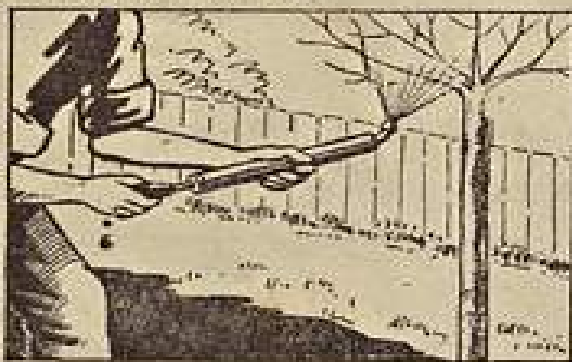
Pruning bush fruits is usually somewhat easier than pruning tree fruits.

You will find "Dig for Victory" Leaflet No. 25 of some help in pruning both trees and bushes. It is illustrated and you can get a free copy from the Ministry at the address given on page 8.

SPRAYING

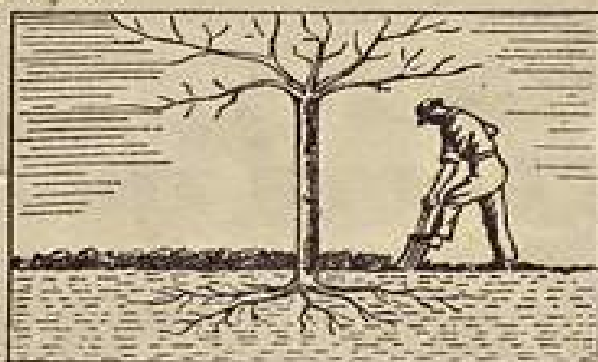
Nowadays the old-fashioned custom of lime washing fruit trees in the winter has almost disappeared. The modern method of pest control on apples, pears, plums and currants (both black and red) is to spray before the end of January with a tar-oil spray, and later with a lime-sulphur spray, and other washes at various stages of growth.

For the moment, the tar-oil wash is most important. You can buy it almost anywhere with full directions for making up. Remember to choose a dry day (not frosty), with little or no wind, for spraying; and make sure that all the branches have been thoroughly wetted all over. Cover up any plants under or near the trees or bushes or the spray will damage them. Newspapers will do.



MANURING FRUIT TREES

If apple and pear trees are not growing very strongly, a dressing of 3 or 4 oz. of hoof and horn meal to the square yard, lightly forked into the ground during winter over the area covered by the branches, will encourage them to make strong growth. In addition, one ounce to the square yard of Sulphate of Ammonia should be worked into the surface soil in spring. Apples and pears especially need potash, and dressings of wood ash from the bonfire should be worked into the ground in April. Bone meal is a useful manure for fruit trees, but need only be applied once every three or four years at the rate of about 3 oz. per square yard. Plums too benefit by a similar dressing, but should also have a dressing of 2 oz. of sulphate of ammonia to the square yard each spring.



Some helpful FREE LEAFLETS

The following leaflets in the "Dig for Victory" series are *free* for the asking and may be helpful to you. You can get them by writing to the Ministry of Agriculture at Berri Court Hotel, St. Annes, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs :—

Dig for Victory Leaflet—

- No. 1—Cropping Plan for a 10-rod plot (300 sq. yds.).
- No. 23—Cropping Plan for a 5-rod plot (150 sq. yds.).
- No. 7—How to make a Compost Heap.
- No. 12—Seed Potatoes.
- No. 18—Better Fruit—Disease Control in Private Gardens.
- No. 25—How to Prune Fruit Trees and Bushes.



There are other useful leaflets in the series: send for a list to the above address.